

Beyond The Horizon

GVRA



**GEORGIA VOCATIONAL
REHABILITATION AGENCY**

August 2017

In This Issue

Page 1 — A Note from Executive Director Sean T. Casey

Page 1 — DAS Continues to Shine

Page 2 — GVRA Staff Wins Awards

Page 3 — New Hires

Page 3 — Calendar of Events

Page 3 — BEP Happenings

Page 4 — GIB Celebrates ADA Anniversary

Page 5 and 6 — Staff at APSE Conference

Page 7 and 8 — Employment Services Gets Down to Business

Page 9 and 10 — Promotional Filming at RWS

Page 11 — Get to Know a Legislator

Page 12 — Process Mapping Underway

Page 13 — Internal Customer Satisfaction Survey

Page 13 — Getting Certified

Executive Director Sean T. Casey

Where we've come and where we're going

The theme of this month's newsletter is "Beyond the Horizon." That's a figure of speech we hear people toss around sometimes when they talk about long-term planning and goal-setting. Having visions and goals is one thing. And it's good to look ahead. But backing up what you promise people with demonstrable action is what really counts.

I have been honored to be a part of this Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency family for about ten months now, and in my time here, I've had a chance to visit thirty-three local offices and several of our program sites. Many of you have heard me say I believe in you as the professionals you are and in your ability to manage your offices, make right decisions, correct course when (as is inevitable with all of us) mistakes are made, and most importantly, serve your clients.

But words are cheap. What's most telling is that, in the time we've been together, looking beyond the horizon at all the possibilities available to us, we have made exciting strides. You now help to hold the

reigns, with more than 185 positions formerly under the umbrella of the Central Office now reporting to the programs that directly serve clients. That says a lot about GVRA's commitment to empower the field staff. And our work isn't done. Chief Client Management Officer Dale Arnold, his experienced Leadership Team, and dozens of experienced VR staff will gather at Stone Mountain this month to lay out Business Processes that will make services faster and more efficient for the people who do the work and those who receive the services. So what's beyond the horizon now? We commit to excellence for Georgians with disabilities. We commit to listen to your feedback on the internal customer service survey you've taken the time to complete. We commit to grow as a family and focus on ideas that bring us together collaboratively.

We hope you'll take time to read the success stories told in this newsletter and enjoy learning more about the accomplishments of your coworkers. As always, I am proud to work with each of you and thankful for all you do.

DAS continues to shine. Its three-month rolling performance accuracy rate has increased from 98.1% to 98.9%. The Georgia DDS is #1 in the region and #2 in the nation. Pictured here from left are Janet Johnson, Michael Merritt and Hope Sinue.



Making it Count

GVRA Staff Honored at IDEAS Conference

At the recently-held IDEAS (Institute Designed for Educating All Students) Conference, several GVRA staff members were honored with awards. Director of Transition Lauri Tuten received the Naomi Walker "Catalyst for Positive Change" Award. Rehabilitation Technologist Gigi Taylor won the The Melinda Quinn "Squeaky Wheel" Award, and Rehabilitation Technologist Kristen McNally won the Tools for Life Leadership Award.

The annual conference, which was held in early June at St. Simons Island, aims to provide high quality professional learning environments through workshops, sessions, and networking related to teaching students with disabilities.

GVRA was given equal billing as a conference partner along with Tools for Life and the Georgia Department of Education. Lauri and Wina Low, Program Manager for GaDOE, co-hosted a concurrent Leadership Academy, which is designed to assist staff in transitioning students with disabilities into meaningful careers. The Academy is in its first year, and organizers are excited about the possibilities for it moving forward.

Pictured below from left: Gigi Taylor, Danny Housley, Krista Mullen, Trey Quinn, Ben Satterfield, Sam Peters, Liz Persaud, Carolyn Phillips, Lauri Tuten, Barbaro Ponce, Wina Low, Pat Satterfield, and Martha Rust.



Recent BEP Happenings

The Business Enterprise Program recently opened a new facility at the Perry National Fairgrounds and Agricenter. The facility, which is state owned, will be managed by Blind Vendor Manager DePalma Strong.

Also, with schools across the state beginning their 2017-2018 school year, BEP is set to kick off its second year of partnership training at the Georgia Academy for the Blind in Macon. This program will continue under the instruction of Blind Vendor Manager Zach Thomas.

"BEP is excited to have the opportunity to train students in areas related to food service and vending," said BEP Director Charlie Garrett. "We hope this training could one day lead to several of the students looking to BEP for entrepreneurial opportunities."

BEP would like to welcome its newest staff members. Those include Sandra Wiggins, Warehouse Associate; William Graham, Training Specialist, Candice Edwards, BEP Macon Counselor, and Bobby Goodman, Program Manager for the Metro/North GA areas.

GVRA Hires as of July 31

We have some new faces at GVRA who have started in the last month. If you see these people, make sure to welcome them to the family: Anytwone Jordan (VR Employment Services), Tonya Shekinah Grizzell (VR LaFayette), Madeline Grayce Jorge (VR LaFayette), Kharhonda L. Jennings (VR Griffin), Chelsea Leigh Dolan (VR Thomasville), Lequietta Netoshia Rosser (GVRA Admin), Robert Schacht (GVRA IT), James Tindall Evans Meadows (GVRA HR), Hakeem Mustafa Muhammad (GVRA HR), Sekory Warrez Bivines (RWS Life Adjustment), Yvonnia J. Robertson (RWS Psychology), and Brian Ken Copeland (GIB Bainbridge).

Calendar of Events

Charting the Future of VR Services
Conference
August 16-17
Stone Mountain, GA

People First of Georgia Conference
August 25-27
Jekyll Island, GA

State Rehabilitation Council Meeting
September 5
Callaway Gardens
Pine Mountain, GA

Georgia Rehabilitation Association Annual
Conference
September 6-8
Callaway Gardens
Pine Mountain, GA

GVRS Board Meeting
September 6
Callaway Gardens
Pine Mountain, GA

GVRA Leadership Summit
November
Date and Location TBD



GIB Celebrates ADA Anniversary

The Americans with Disabilities Act at 27

On July 21st, Georgia Industries for the Blind (GIB) joined forces with the local Center for Independent Living, Bain Inc., to celebrate the 27th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act. GIB, who is the largest employer of blind individuals in the region, has been a longtime sponsor of the annual ADA activities hosted by Bain Inc. This year sponsorship included an exhibitor booth, screen-printed t-shirts, and door prizes.

The festivities kicked off with a march through the main streets of the community, culminating at the Bainbridge Middle School Cafeteria where a formal program was held. The program was filled with informative and interactive activities that included service agency booths, special speakers, and simulation activities.

One of the featured presentations was that of Ada Velasquez, an administrative assistant at GIB. Ada gave an overview of American Sign Language. Her presentation included the importance of sign language as a medium of communicating thoughts and ideas with persons with sensory loss, hand shapes and finger spelling. She presented a detailed demonstration of finger spelling to the audience.

Ada shared her story on how she learned to sign.

"Back in 2010, I became employed at the Bainbridge Home Depot as a part-time cashier, and my head-cashier was deaf," she said. "She had been an employee since the doors opened. She was very knowledgeable of the store layout, products, and services. She took me under her wing since day one, but communication was a barrier. The only way she and others could communicate was by writing everything down on a notepad

she always carried in her apron. She always asked the other cashiers if they were interested in learning sign language, but no one really took interest, until she asked me. There was no way I could turn that opportunity down. She was willing to teach me, and I was more than happy to learn. After about six months, I became a full time employee, and we had more time for lessons. We took full advantage of all the down time. We started with the ABC's, slowly working our way to words and sentences. After about a year of working together, I was the only one in the entire store that was able to communicate with her without using a pen and paper. I felt useful and proud."

Also included in this year's program were exhibitors from Agencies serving individuals with disabilities such as, the SWGA Library for Accessible Services, Easter Seals, and Mobility Works.

The program ended with food and many fun activities for all.



APSE Conference a Success

Written by Special Projects Coordinator D'arcy Robb

Employment can be a bridge to so much good in our lives. For most of us, our employment is not only how we support ourselves, but a major way that we connect with others and our communities. So it was very fitting that APSE, the Association of People Supporting Employment First, held their national conference this year in the City of Bridges – beautiful Portland, Oregon. This June, two very lucky GVRA employees – our Academic Transition Teacher Karla Wade and myself – were invited to present at APSE 2017. APSE (pronounced AP-see) is a national non-profit organization that focuses exclusively on integrated employment and career advancement opportunities for people with disabilities.

They also put on some of the best conferences I've ever seen, with a fantastic mix of speakers, topics and formats. Some of the breakout sessions I attended included Aligning Federal Policy with Employment First, where we talked about the need to make work the norm; Us Versus Them, where a state DD council leader and the head of her state's CRP association talked about navigating a rewarding partnership; and State Systems Change in Ohio, Washington DC, Virginia and Missouri. And that was just the first day. All told, APSE attendees had over 100 breakout sessions to choose from over three days.

APSE is all about Employment First, and many of you who have worked with me know that I am too. But I want to make it clear what Employment First does and doesn't mean. Employment First means that competitive integrated employment should be the first and preferred outcome in the provision of services to working-age people with disabilities, regardless of how significant the impact of their disability.

Employment First means there is no such thing as "unemployable." However, Employment First does not mean a person *has* to work. It does mean that we look at employment as the first and preferred option for all working-age folks with disabilities. Often, this involves a heavy dose of creativity. And in the case of people whose disability has a more significant impact on their ability to work, it may involve working with partners to make sure that the person has the long-term support they need to stay employed and build their career.

I heard a great Employment First story from a service provider in Ohio. This provider was working with a young man who loved paint by numbers ... to the point where he didn't want to do much else. The provider realized that in their town, there was a company that produced animatronic animals for Walt Disney World. Once the animal forms were sculpted, someone needed to insert their fur. That's thousands upon thousands of pieces of fur, inserted just so to create the right patterns. Kind of like paint by numbers! The provider helped the young man get a job at this company where he is currently thriving.

Karla Wade and I got to share our stories of young people thriving, too. On the final day of APSE, we presented "Dreams, Goals, and Graduation: Inclusive Postsecondary Education (IPSE) as a Path to Careers." The idea was to educate participants about IPSE and to show them how to bake quality career development into an IPSE program so that students flow smoothly from their programs into their careers. All IPSE students complete a number of internships, career development activities and classes in their career fields while they are in IPSE



programs. This academic year, 15 students graduated from IPSE programs here in Georgia. And right now, just two months after May graduation, 11 of those students are already employed. Those outcomes are a lot better than the ones for young Georgians with intellectual disabilities who do not receive postsecondary education, who have a staggeringly-high 68% unemployment rate, according to data compiled by the Institute for Community Inclusion at U Mass Boston.

Bottom line – APSE is a terrific conference that inspires people to innovate and push the envelope when it comes to employment for people with disabilities. And it's coming

to Georgia! This November, APSE is hosting its Regional Institute right here in Atlanta. The Regional Institute is aimed at providers who want to build their capacity for supported employment, and more information is available at <http://apse.org/2017regionalinstitute/>. Then next summer, APSE's national conference is being held just down the road from us in Orlando, Florida. Details are not yet posted on this one but the dates are June 26-28. And last but definitely not least, we are beginning plans for the 2018 Georgia Evolution Conference, which is proudly put on by GVRA and will feature some of the same folks who make APSE such a terrific experience.



Getting Down to Business in Macon



The GVRA employment services team was in Macon recently to outline their efforts to engage with the business community moving forward. Pictured top is Employment Services Director Ken Hise as he address his team. Below that, team members were recognized with special awards given by Executive Director Sean Casey. From left and clockwise, Winston Oluwole received the Team Player Award. Angela Parrott received the Customer Service Award. Vivian McCray received the Rising Star Award, and Olga Guerra received the Statewide Highest Performer Award.



Connecting Business With Clients

Employment Services Makes Jobs Happen

“Who did you put to work today?”

It was the question on the back of every table tent at the Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency (GVRA) Employment Services Training in late July and also the question every team member in the department is encouraged to ask themselves on a daily basis.

GVRA Director of Employment Services Ken Hise regularly brings his team, comprised of Business Relations Managers, Employment Consultants, and other staff, together for training, to share best practices, and to learn from subject matter experts. “Putting people to work is everything. That’s the main thing,” Ken said. “You can network, travel, shake hands, and of course I recognize those things are important, because you have to build the relationships. But at the end of the day, it’s putting people to work that is the only reason any of us are here.”

Employment Services is currently undergoing a transformation. The department was established in December under Ken’s leadership, but it is housed within Client Management as part of the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) business process. Ken believes the seamless integration of employment services into VR is crucial, because it allows Employment Consultants to develop relationships with clients at the beginning of the process.

“We have to know our pipeline,” Ken said. “When an employer calls, and says, hey, this is what I need, I have to know who I have ready to go to work.”

Representatives of the Poses Foundation, which collaborates with GVRA on the E3

transition grant, also joined the employment services team to discuss innovative marketing strategies with Executive Director Sean Casey and Director of Marketing and Communications Robin Folsom. They applauded GVRA’s forays into broadcast television and radio spots and brainstormed other strategies, like boosting Employment Services’ online presence.

Said Business Relations Manager Bill Bulloch, “The creative part is the fun part, getting paid to come up with innovative ways to get employers’ attention. When a potential client sees an ad or reads about a business that’s hired successful people, of course their immediate response is, ‘Hey, I can do that. Why not? That can be me.’”

Also at the event, the team took a few minutes to recognize and celebrate the achievements of top performers. Honorees included Vivian McCray, Employment Consultant from Perry, who received the Rising Star Award for new employees; Angela Parrott, Employment Consultant from Tifton and recipient of the Customer Service Award; Winston Oluwole, Employment Consultant from College Park, who was honored with the Team Player Award; and Olga Lela Guerra, Employment Consultant from Rome, who earned the distinction as the Statewide Highest Performer for the most closures.

In congratulating those recognized, Executive Director Casey said, “I am honored to be standing here with you today. It’s things like this, taking time to recognize hard work and also have a little fun, that I really appreciate. Your efforts do not go unnoticed and do not go unappreciated.”



Scenes from RWS Filming



From Class to Career

How RWS is Moving Students Into Careers

The GVRA Office of Communications and Marketing was recently on hand shooting videos at Roosevelt Warm Springs (RWS) to promote the kind of programs that help students quickly transition from the classroom into the workforce.

Specifically, the videos—which are being edited and will be made available on the agency website in the next month or so—highlighted the Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) and Robotics programs. Both of these are among a host of certifications offered at RWS that give students the skills necessary for high-demand careers in fields that are consistently hiring across the state and the country. What's more, these programs are available through RWS' Day Program. This program offers students the opportunity to take classes without requiring them to stay in on-campus housing, effectively expanding opportunities to more potential students.

The video project will specifically help the robotics program receive certification through Fanuc, a systems manufacturer who offers a complete range of industry-leading products and services for robotics, Computer Numeric Control (CNC) systems and factory automation solutions. All the robotics and CNC systems at RWS are provided through Fanuc.

While Fanuc has already certified the CNC program at RWS—a process that was relatively simple compared to the rigors required for robotics certification—it's important for both programs to receive certification to further reinforce the value of the program in paving the way for students to find a career upon completion, said CNC and Robotics Instructor Billy Garrett.

"The certifications are very important to make sure students and parents recognize what a good program we have here," he said. "These are high-demand careers that pay well, and we want our students ready for them when they graduate."

Video editing will take place over the next few weeks, and staff anticipate the certification to come within the next month or two.

The robotics and CNC programs were born out of an effort several years ago at RWS to provide students with work-ready skills.

"There's 155,000 unfilled jobs in the workforce, and most of them are jobs in these related fields," said John Holt, President of Technical Training Aids, a supplier of much of the advanced equipment used at RWS. "To me, it's easy to start targeting these jobs that are most in demand."

The CNA program at RWS, which will also be featured in the video series, has a record similar to the robotics and CNC programs in that it too provides students with skillsets that translate easily into the workforce at large.

Those skills are a diverse cross section of what's needed to help patients in a variety of facilities across the state. From using a transfer belt to move a patient to counting a patient's radial pulse to dressing and feeding patients, the necessary skills require an acute attention to detail.

And the program has demonstrated that it prepares students to start their career once they graduate, with nearly every person who finishes the program finding a job shortly thereafter.



Get to Know a Legislator

This Month We Feature Rep. Joe Burns



Development and Tourism; Ethics; Game, Fish and Parks; Rules, and Transportation Committees.

Prior to serving in the House of Representatives, Burns was the 12th Congressional District representative on the Georgia Department of Transportation Board. Representative Burns is a member and Sunday School Superintendent at Mizpah United Methodist Church.

He is a past member of the Rotary Club and the Georgia Southern University Alumni Association Board of Directors, member and past president of the Effingham County Chamber of Commerce, member of the Georgia Agribusiness Council, member and past president of the Effingham County Young Farmers Organization, and member of Sigma Chi Fraternity. He also proudly served in the Georgia Army National Guard.

Representative Burns and his sons own and operate a diversified agribusiness company that offers custom products and services to farmers, livestock producers, and the construction industry. Burns and his sons also operate the family farm.

Representative Burns and his wife, Dayle, live on the family farm in northern Effingham County. Dayle is a retired educator.

They have two grown sons, two daughter-in-laws, and five grandchildren.

Representative Jon Burns, first elected in November 2004, was born and raised in Effingham County—part of the area that he proudly serves today.

Burns graduated from Effingham County High School and earned his Bachelor's degree in Political Science from Georgia Southern University. He holds a Juris Doctor degree from John Marshall Law School.

Burns' was elected as the House Majority Leader in 2015 and serves on Agriculture and Consumer Affairs; Appropriations, Higher Education Subcommittee; Economic





Staff from across GVRA are busy working on process mapping to determine how to best serve our clients. They should roll out these new processes in the coming months.



How Can We Improve?

Internal Survey to Spark Change

GVRA staff recently received an online survey looking at internal customer service as it relates to the central office in Atlanta serving the various field offices across the state. It will be open until August 21.

"We want to make sure the field has all the support they need to succeed," said GVRA Deputy Executive Director Kevin Harris. "

While previous surveys have focused on individual programs, this survey focuses on support services provided by Agency Administrative Offices. The offices are: Business Applications, Communications &

Marketing, External Affairs, Facilities, Fiscal Services, General Counsel, Human Resources, Information Technology, and Strategy and Innovation. Staff are encouraged to take this opportunity to provide valuable and important feedback about their level of satisfaction with the services they have received from these departments.

Participation is voluntary but will help insure that the services provided to staff and others in the future are the best possible. All responses will be kept anonymous.

Getting Certified

Kristen McNally (second from the left in the middle row) recently completed 95 hours of rehabilitation counseling with deaf and hard-of-hearing adults, receiving certification through Western Oregon University's Regional Resource Center on Deafness. Congratulations Kristen!



www.gvs.ga.gov

Printed at Roosevelt Warm Springs

 [Twitter.com/gavocrehab](https://twitter.com/gavocrehab)

 [Facebook.com/gavocrehab](https://facebook.com/gavocrehab)